

Health Insurance Partnership is alive!

Great news! The Small Business Health Insurance Partnership I designed in 2007 is alive and well and accepting enrollments starting in September. The partnership (HIP, for short) offers premium assistance for eligible small businesses who couldn't otherwise afford to insure their employees. HIP helps with employee premiums, too.

The program couldn't start in 2009 due to the state budget deficit. But the federal government liked our approach and offered a \$35 million grant to get it going! HIP will offer a wide range of insurance options, from the low-cost high-deductible plans to comprehensive coverage. To learn more, visit the HIP web page (<http://www.hip.hca.wa.gov/>).

I got the idea for HIP from small-business owners who asked for help with insurance costs. If you have an idea for a good law, please share it with me. Many ideas I've passed into law, from senior citizen property-tax relief to help for veterans and military families, come from the people I serve. I'd love to hear your ideas.

Honoring veterans and military service

Thanks to the support of military families and Major General Timothy J. Lowenberg, Washington State's Adjutant General, my proposal to protect military leave rights for public employees passed unanimously! It builds on the 2007 law I passed that extended military leave for these employees from 15 to 21 days.



Unfortunately, some jurisdictions were excluding leave coverage for military training or responses to state emergencies. Some were even charging military leave for days when the employees weren't scheduled to work! The new law fixes both problems. We took other steps this year to help veterans and men and women currently serving:

- Community and Technical Colleges were told to develop new ways to award academic credit for prior work and military experience.
- A new law suggested by National Guard members encourages state agencies to award 3 percent of their business contracts to businesses owned by veterans and service members.
- A Disabled Veterans Assistance Account was created to encourage and accept voluntary donations to help disabled veterans.

Honoring and helping veterans is not just a state responsibility. I hope everyone offers their personal support to the men and women who protect our flag, families and freedoms.

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
WA STATE DEPT
OF PRINTING 98501

2010 Legislative Wrap-up

Rep. Dawn Morrell

434B Legislative Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Keep up to date with legislative news!

Please sign up for my legislative e-memo. I send them by email every week or two during legislative sessions. It is the fastest and least expensive way for me to let you know about issues that matter to our Pierce County families and communities.



Dawn Morrell

2010 Legislative Wrap-up

Dear Neighbors,

After the end of a very tough legislative session in the worst national economic downturn since the Great Depression, we balanced the state budget. We had a big problem, made tough decisions and took the hard votes to keep our state moving forward.

Unlike the federal government, we must balance our budget and we did so without doing drastic damage to our public schools, health care or the criminal justice system. Some politicians said we should not use federal money to balance the budget. But I wasn't willing to take long-term care and medicines from the elderly, or take health care or learning opportunities from children, or reduce job opportunities or job training when both are needed.

We also stopped efforts to pass an across-the-board sales-tax increase. Instead, we made \$4.50 in cuts for every dollar in new revenue.

Inside this newsletter, I'll tell you about issues that are important to our families in the 25th District, including jobs, health care and veterans' issues.

There isn't enough room here to talk about everything that happened this year, so if you have a question or an issue you'd like to hear more about, please call my office and we'll get back to you.

Thank you again for allowing me to be your state representative. It's an honor and a pleasure to serve the families of the 25th District.

Let's keep in touch!

Dawn

Keeping in Touch

District Office:

(Please send mail to Olympia Office)
103 West Meeker
Puyallup, WA 98371
(253) 840-4604

Mail:

434b Legislative Bldg.
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

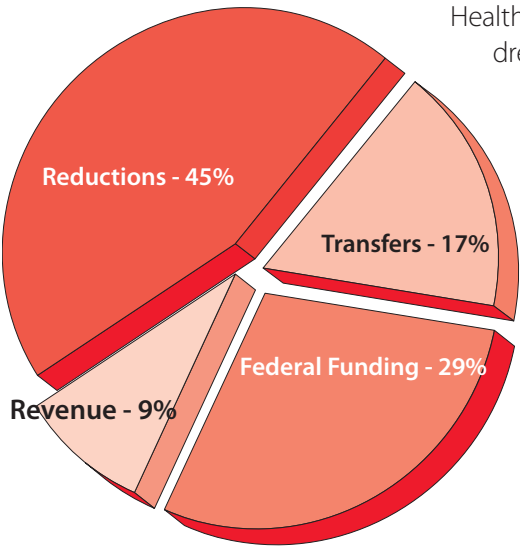
Email: dawn.morrell@leg.wa.gov
Toll-free Hotline: 1-800-562-6000
TTY (hearing impaired): 1-800-635-9993

Committees:

Leadership: Majority Caucus Chair
Health Care and Wellness
Capital Budget
Rules
Health & Human Services Appropriations
Joint Committee on Veterans' & Military Affairs

Balancing the budget

The Legislature passed a good budget given the incredibly tough times. We protected health care for seniors and working people and we fought off attempts to completely eliminate the Basic Health Plan and drastically reduce children’s health care. We also saved Meals on Wheels, Day Health programs and other services that countless seniors rely on, and we kept the dream of college alive for 12,300 students who would have lost state need grants under an all-cuts budget.



The Legislature made more than \$4.50 in budget cuts for every dollar in new revenues to balance the biennial budget.

I’m relieved we avoided an all-cuts budget that would have devastated our public schools, ending all-day kindergarten and giving pink slips to hundreds of teachers. Kids would’ve been crammed even more tightly into classrooms. And it would have

put our families in danger because of drastic cuts to public safety funding. We kept faith with state responsibilities even though we made deeper budget cuts than any Legislature since the 1950’s. In fact, our reduced budget is \$1 billion smaller than the previous two-year budget—the first time our state budget has shrunk in real terms since 1951! There are also about 4,100 fewer state-agency employees (excluding higher education) than two years ago.

The revenue package we adopted avoided a general sales tax increase, but does include higher taxes on cigarettes, bottled water, candy and gum, and modest temporary increases on beer, soda pop and service businesses. But I am glad we were successful in protecting small businesses—and jobs—by doubling the Small Business Tax Credit.

So I’m happy we took a balanced approach. Do I like everything about the budget? No. But it’s a lot better than the cliff we’d be staring at if we’d gone with 20 percent cuts across-the-board, which were seriously threatened during the special session.



Jobs, schools and lower energy costs

Just two hours before the special session ended, we passed the JOBS Act I supported. It aims to take advantage of super-low interest rates by using state bonds for repairing and modernizing schools and colleges. This would not only create about 30,000 much-needed construction jobs, we’d save taxpayers \$130 million a year in energy costs and provide children with healthier schools. This proposal will be on the November ballot.

We also added six more Local Revitalization Financing projects in Puyallup, Richland, Lacey, Renton, Bothell, and Spokane, which will create an additional 3,585 construction jobs and 11,232 permanent jobs.

Helping heart attack & stroke victims

I’m glad to report that the Legislature passed my idea for developing a statewide system that will help heart attack and stroke victims get the right care in the fastest possible time.

We have a great model of how to do it at Good Samaritan Hospital in Puyallup, where I work as a critical care nurse. When emergency medical teams bring a heart attack or stroke victim to Good Sam, our stroke and cardiac care teams are alerted and preparing for emergency treatment even before the ambulance arrives.

Many people in our state aren’t so lucky. Some hospital teams aren’t trained in the most advanced procedures to treat strokes or heart attacks, and emergency medical teams sometimes take patients to hospitals where the patient must be transferred elsewhere—which costs precious time when every second counts.

My bill will identify which hospitals are best able to treat heart attacks or strokes. This will help hospitals to improve their procedures and help emergency medical teams to get patients to the right hospital as fast as possible. That will save time, and saving time means saving lives. Every Democrat, Republican and Independent in the Legislature voted unanimously for my proposal after hearing its life-saving potential.



Visiting with grandchildren on Children’s Day in the Legislature.

Protecting our local schools

Not even schools—our top priority—were immune from recession-driven budget cuts. But like many educators who spoke with me, I was relieved the 0.9% reduction to school funding wasn’t worse and glad that we enacted reforms to ensure better funding in the future.

- We got started on funding reforms recommended by the Quality Education Council by setting firm timelines for full-funding of smaller class sizes in early grades, reasonable maintenance & operations costs, and improved support for student transportation.
- New levy lid changes will prevent school districts from losing local levy dollars due to state reductions to the people’s education initiatives (I-728 and I-732). A temporary 4% increase in levy lids and strengthened levy equalization will also help school districts weather the temporarily reduced state funding.
- Teachers, principals, other school employees and parent groups did Washington proud by working together for new policy reforms that will help us compete for federal “Race to the Top” dollars. The reforms include more accountability for under-performing schools, a new approach to evaluating teachers and principals, improved outreach to parents, and new opportunities to prepare and recruit talented teachers.



Speaking for Pierce County families in hearings is a big part of my job.

